DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 161 121 95 EA 010 934

AUTHOR	Sayers, Susan
TITLE	Personal & Professional Development: An Individualized Approach. Keys to Community Involvement Series: 5.
INSTITUTION	National School Public Relations Association, Arlington, Va.; Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jan 78
CONTRACT	400-76-0025
NOTE	25p.; For related documents, see EA 010 930-944
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 ($2.00; $24.00 for set of 15 Keys; discounts available; payment must accompany order)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Citizen Participation; *Community Involvement; Goal Orientation; Group Relations; *Interpersonal Relationship; Organizational Effectiveness; *Personal Growth; Problem Solving; *Professional Personnel; Professional Training; *Self Evaluation; *Staff Improvement; Worksheets

ABSTRACT

This booklet is designed to help individuals develop their own problem-solving skills in their personal or professional life. The development process includes four sequenced steps: (1) self-assessment, (2) goal setting, (3) working to meet a goal, and (4) evaluation. Four self-assessment tools are included to help individuals decide the areas of personal and professional development in which they want to work. (Author/MLF)

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Keys to Community Involvement Series

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A Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

January 1978

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This publication is not printed at the expense of the Federal Government.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

KEYS TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH

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Published and distributed by the
National School Public Relations Association
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the following Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory staff members for their assistance: Robert G. Green, Managing Editor; Diane G. Jones and Bonnie Holt, Coordination and Production Assistance; Chris Brown and Dee Rowe, Manuscript Typing; and Warren Schlegel, Cover Design and Illustrations.

Also acknowledged are the contributions of the Laboratory's Rural Education Program staff members whose work forms the basis of the *Keys to Community Involvement* booklets. Suggestions and comments from a number of people in western communities, schools and organizations have also been invaluable in shaping the ideas that are contained in these materials.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Keys to Community Involvement is a series of booklets developed for governing boards, community leaders, group members, administrators and citizens. The booklets are designed to help these audiences strengthen their skills in group processes, work cooperatively with others, and plan and carry out new projects. Topics include techniques to maintain enthusiasm in a group, ways that agencies can effectively use consultants, and factors that affect introducing and implementing new projects.

The booklets are written by members of the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The Laboratory is a nonprofit, educational research and development corporation, headquartered in Portland, Oregon.

The booklets in the series are adapted from a much more comprehensive set of materials and training activities developed and field tested by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory over the past several years in dozens of locations throughout the western United States.

Information about other booklets in this series--titles and how to order--as well as information about related services--training, workshops and consultation--can be found on the inside and outside back covers of this booklet.

INTRODUCTION

Personal and professional growth is a boundless and challenging domain. As we grow and learn, our personal capacities increase and our challenges change. We develop in our own time. The key to a life of continual growth and development is to be able to recognize the times you need new knowledge or skills and know how to get them.

Most of the booklets in the series, *Keys to Community Involvement*, are about how group leaders and participants work together to build their problem-solving skills. This booklet helps you to develop your own problem-solving skills in your personal or professional life. The development process includes four sequenced steps: (1) self-assessment, (2) goal setting, (3) working to meet your goal and (4) evaluation.

STEP I: SELF-ASSESSMENT

> *"The first principle is this: People do not behave according to the facts as others see them; they behave in terms of what seems to them to be so.... What affects human behavior ...is not so much the forces exerted on people from without as the meanings existing for the individual within."*
>
> *Arthur Combs*

When setting out to examine personal and professional growth, you may have the awesome feeling experienced by an artist who stands before an empty canvas and asks, "What do I want to create? What do I do? Where do I start?" To make the task of self-assessment more manageable, first consider three dimensions--work, relationships and self.

When you ask yourself, "What am I doing with my time, energy and resources?" you are asking a question about work.

When you ask yourself, "How am I relating to others?" it is a question of relationship. Relationships are described in terms of movement away from, toward or alongside others.

When asking questions about uniqueness, separateness and aloneness, you are dealing with the dimension of self.

Gradually, the painter's canvas fills with color, texture and design. So, too, the individual's sense of growth and development gradually takes form. Self knowledge grows out of an examination of work, relationships and self. The four self-assessment tools which follow are intended to help you decide the areas of personal and professional development in which you want to work.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Look over each of the four self-assessment tools and select the one which is most useful for you.

2. Before you begin to use any of them, let your body settle down. Take a deep breath. Then exhale. Let the tension drain out of your body."

3. As the body quiets down, imagine that your mind is peaceful, too. Then reflect on the questions. Tune in to yourself. Take your time.

4. Read each item on the self-assessment tool you have selected and write down your response.

5. In addition to filling out the form(s) of your choice and reflecting on your answers, there can be value in talking about what you've learned with another person. The value in sharing the results of the assessment instrument is that you get to elaborate on your ideas, clarify what's true and real for you and gain the perceptions of another person.

   Follow these tips for selecting someone with whom to share:

   - Choose someone you trust and feel good about.
   - Be certain you both have adequate time to talk through issues that come up. Plan for an hour.
   - Choose a reflective listener. Someone who will support and assist you in gaining clarification about your work, relationships and feelings about yourself.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 1

1. Think carefully about the work you've done during the past six months. In the space provided below, list the five things you enjoyed the most. Next to each one, explain why the task gave you pleasure. Then, list the five things you enjoyed least. To the right, explain why the task was frustrating, confusing, or otherwise dissatisfying. Use a form like the sample below.

	Work Enjoyed	Rea
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		
E.		

	Work Not Enjoyed	Reason
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		
E.		

4

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 1 (continued)

2. Consider the relationships you have with others. List the names of five people with whom you have a satisfying relationship. On the right, explain your part in determining characteristics of the relationship which make it valuable. Then, think of five people with whom your relationship is not satisfying. List their names on the left. To the right, explain your part in determining the characteristics of the relationship which make it dissatisfying. Use a form like the sample below.

Satisfying Relationship	Characteristics
A.	
B.	
C.	
D.	
E.	

Unsatisfying Relationship	Characteristics
A.	
B.	
C.	
D.	
E.	

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 1 (continued)

3. Think about yourself, the person you are when you are alone. In the first chart, list the characteristics of who you are when you are feeling good about yourself. Next to the characteristic, explain why each gives you pleasure. In the second chart, list five characteristics that don't please you and explain why each characteristic causes you distress.

Who you are when you feel good about yourself	Reason
A.	
B.	
C.	
D.	
E.	

Who you are when you don't feel good about yourself	Reason
A.	
B.	
C.	
D.	
E.	

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL #2

Answer the following questions. Think about the underlying values and assumptions that prompt your response. Take your time. Relax. Enjoy yourself.

1. When people praise you on the job, what kinds of things do they mention?

2. Do you have any unusual talents, skills, or knowledge? What kind of activity do you do very well?

3. What talents or skills do you use today that you weren't aware of or hadn't developed a year ago?

4. What talents or resources do you have that are not now fully utilized and not in the process of being developed?

5. What talents or skills would you like to develop further?

6. Is your being a _____(fill in what you do; i.e., teacher, carpenter, parent) bringing you a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction? If yes, which parts of your job give you a feeling of accomplishment? If not, what is missing?

7. What is there about being a _____(fill in your job title) that you

   - like the least?

   - like the most?

8. What personal characteristics do you have that make your work easy?

9. What characteristics do you have that get in your way?

10. What are you trying to accomplish in your work?

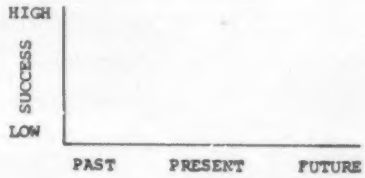
11. What kind of relationship do you want with your colleagues?

12. Who are you having the most difficulty with right now? What are you doing? What is the other person doing?

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 3

1. Using the pattern of a business progress chart, draw a line that depicts the past, present, and future success of your work.

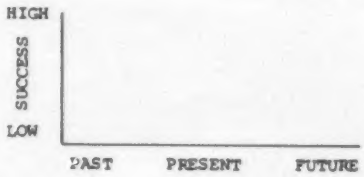
WORK



Write a brief explanation of the career line you have drawn.

2. Draw a line that depicts the past, present, and future of your relationships.

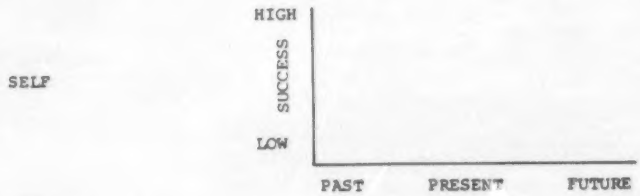
RELATIONSHIPS



Write a brief explanation of the relationship line you have drawn.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 3 (continued)

3. Draw a line that depicts the past, present, and future of your self-development.



Write a brief explanation of the self-development line you have drawn.

4. List 20 adjectives each for the following categories which describe you most accurately in regard to (a) your work, (b) your relationships with others, and (c) your self-development. Share your lists with someone who knows you and ask them to comment.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 4 *

Directions for Use:

1. Read through the list of skills and decide which ones you are doing all right, which ones you should do more, and which ones you should do less. Mark each item in the appropriate blank.

2. Some goals that are important to you may not be listed. Add them in the space provided.

3. After completing your ratings, go back and examine the "need to do it more" and the "need to do it less" columns. Keep these items in mind. You may want to use them in *Step II: Goal Setting*.

General Skills	Doing All Right	Need To Do It More	Need To Do It Less
1. Understanding why I do or say what I do (insights)	_____	_____	_____
2. Keeping agreements	_____	_____	_____
3. Making choices that please me	_____	_____	_____
4. Thinking before I talk	_____	_____	_____
5. Willingly engaging in conversation	_____	_____	_____
6. Encouraging comments on my own behavior	_____	_____	_____
7. Being open and honest about what I'm feeling	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____
Observation Skills			
1. Noting tension in conversation	_____	_____	_____
2. Noting who talks to whom	_____	_____	_____
3. Noting interest level	_____	_____	_____
4. Sensing feelings of individuals	_____	_____	_____
5. Observing who is left out	_____	_____	_____
6. Being aware of my reactions	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 4 (continued)

Problem-Solving Skills	Doing All Right	Need To Do It More	Need To Do It Less
1. Stating problems or goals clearly			
2. Asking for ideas, opinions			
3. Giving ideas			
4. Evaluating ideas critically			
5. Summarizing			
6. Clarifying			
7. _____			

Communication Skills			
1. Sharing perceptions			
2. Giving feedback			
3. Describing behavior			
4. Paraphrasing			
5. Describing feelings			
6. Expressing anger			
7. Expressing warmth and appreciation			
8. Disagreeing openly			
9. Listening alertly			
10. _____			

SELF-ASSESSMENT: TOOL 4 (continued)

Social Relationships Skills	Doing All Right	Need To Do It More	Need To Do It Less
1. Competing to outdo others			
2. Acting dominant towards others			
3. Cooperating and collaborating			
4. Trusting others			
5. Responding to the needs of others			
6. Showing interest in others			
7. Encouraging and supporting others			
8. _____			
Self-Actualization Skills			
1. Taking responsibility for myself			
2. Living in terms of my wants and likes			
3. Operating with clear intention and purpose			
4. Behaving spontaneously			
5. Risking being myself			
6. Being confident and comfortable with who I am			
7. _____			

*Adapted from Ruth Emory and René Pino, "Paper 8: Goals for Personal Development," Preparing Educational Training Consultants: Skills Training (PETC-I). Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Portland, Oregon: Commercial Educational Distributing Services, 1973.

After using one or more of these tools, you probably have some ideas about your strengths and weaknesses in work, relationships and sense of self. *Section II: Goal Setting*, offers suggestions for how to pinpoint the personal and/or professional goals on which you want to work.

STEP II: GOAL SETTING

> *Every person is, in part, "his own project" and makes himself. Growth forward...requires courage and strength in the individual as well as protection, permission, and encouragement from the environment.*
>
> *Abraham Maslow*

Someone once said, "Any road is a good one if you don't know where you're going." Setting goals helps clarify direction and destination. The self-assessment material in Step I expands your self-awareness. It assists you in recognizing where you've been. Now you stand at the crossroads.

This section helps you identify where you want to go. There are probably several work, relationship or self goals on which you could work.

Use the following goal setting process to focus on a few goals and begin to develop your plans for reaching your destination.

1. List your goals. Consider your work. List five goals related to your job. Refer to the information you generated in the self-assessment.

   Consider your interpersonal relationships. What are your goals? Be specific.

Personally, what are your goals for your physical, mental, emotional or spiritual self? How are your current values, beliefs, attitudes and behavior working for you? Are you personally getting the results you want from your life?

2. Prioritize your goals. Go over the three lists and select the one goal in each category that is most important to you right now.

3. Plan for Goal Achievement. Answering the journalist's questions, "who, what, when, where, how and why" puts you on the right track for moving toward your goal. Many people find that writing a personal growth contract with specific steps and timelines works well for them. There is value in sharing the contract with others and working together periodically to review progress. Check the tips on page 3 for selecting someone with whom to talk. You may design your own contract or use the sample provided.

SAMPLE PERSONAL CONTRACT

Name:

Date:

Shared with:

1. What is my goal? (Be specific.)

2. What steps are necessary to reach the goal? (List in order.)

3. What kinds of assistance will I need?

   People:

   Money:

   Materials:

4. When will I start?

   When will I finish?

   When will I report my progress to another person?

5. What will be the evidence that the goal has been reached?

STEP III: WORKING TO MEET YOUR GOAL

"The only way to do it, is to do it."

Roberta Flack

Thinking about a goal, considering alternatives, imagining what it would be like if you did a, b or c doesn't get you to your goal. The smoker doesn't quit smoking by trying. The dieter doesn't lose weight by thinking about being thin while eating lemon meringue pie. After initial planning, action is the way to goal accomplishment.

Some goals can be met in an hour; others take much longer. Carrying out the plan to reach a goal can be exciting and adventuresome. For example, carrying out a personal goal of sky diving will get the adrenalin flowing and butterflies fluttering. Meeting other goals, however, can be more of a drag--remembering not to interrupt others, for instance, even if they take a long time to say very little. What's important is knowing there is movement toward your goal.

Often, reaching your goal involves risk. It's obvious that sky diving involves risk, but there's also risk involved in agreeing to be the chairperson. What happens if you work very hard, and nobody notices? What if you are very successful and people have higher expectations and place greater demands on you? How will you handle success?

Of course, what's a risk for one person may be as easy as breathing for another. What one person does naturally and easily, others will struggle with. However, taking the risk and working toward the goal is the only way of reaching the goal.

The fear of making a mistake or being wrong is often the risk that scares and immobilizes people. John K. Galbraith has said,

> ...it is possible that our greatest danger in these days of massive introspection, is from our terrible solemnity. For this is a serious source of inflexibility. Change and new evidence have a way of making previous convictions seem odd, even ridiculous. The reasonably relaxed person can accept correction without too grievous loss of dignity, but the solemn man cannot. He may have heard that the truth will set him free. But he rightly senses that it might also make him seem silly.

Being able to laugh at oneself and feel confident in one's courage to be imperfect is an indicator of personal growth.

STEP IV: SELF-EVALUATION

This booklet provides no set method for evaluating self-improvement goals. However, it is important to f- consciously monitor and evaluate your work toward meeting your goals.

If you write a self-improvement contract, you can specify monitoring points. If you choose to do some course work, you might evaluate your progress when you complete the course. You and a friend or colleague may schedule time to talk about how you're doing in meeting a specified goal. Review this booklet occasionally. After you reach one goal, prioritize the remaining list of goals and choose another focus.

Evaluation is not the final step. It is a further step that helps you focus on self-assessment.

Some suggestions for engaging in evaluation are:

1. Keep a journal of your activities and progress related to your goals.

2. Use a tape recorder or videotape and review the tape to see how you are doing.

3. Observe others. See how they handle a situation. Model those behaviors you respect.

4. Ask for feedback. Your colleagues will often be willing to assist you in evaluating progress. Let them know your goal and ask them to assess how successful you're being.

5. Use instruments and rating sheets. Date each self-assessment instrument when you use it. Then use it again in a month or two. Note the changes that have occurred.

6. Identify your own means of measuring your progress.

CONCLUSION

Expanding individual capacity is a lifetime adventure. Personal development and change are the excitement of life. Every so often, stop and ask yourself, "How am I doing?" Examine your attitudes, knowledge and skill as they relate to work, your relationships and your feelings about yourself. Then set your goal and develop your plan for meeting the goal. On an ongoing basis, measure your progress. Remember evaluation is not a final step but part of a circle of development--a step that helps you focus once again on self-assessment.

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